

## *Pacific Landscapes* *Archaeological Approaches*



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a model of change in the size of units, architectural variation through time, and differences in regional population growth. As the authors indicate, the model needs a great deal of further testing and refinement because some of the data are of questionable comparability and the independent dating leaves much to be desired. The paper would have been improved significantly if it

were accompanied by detailed maps of the regions studied (not simply points on the island) and some graphic presentations of spatial variation. There is another point that should be addressed. The authors say that "the spatial characteristics of Hawaiian community organization [defined] in archaeological terms...is a topic most anthropologists and archaeologists [in Hawai'i] take as a given..." the "given" being primarily the land unit boundaries identified in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This statement is simply not true, and I was puzzled by the assertion until I realized that the authors have neglected referencing the two areas of the literature where this is commonly discussed: historical ethnographic research based on Hawaiian traditions, and the enormous CRM literature (call it "gray" if you wish, but this is where 99% of the archaeology in Hawai'i is reported, and these reports are readily available). However, these small problems aside, this study (and related work on temple seriation in Hawai'i) shows great potential for archaeological research in Hawai'i where it has been difficult to identify the significant factors producing architectural variability, and where chronology is a problem that needs as much methodological attention as possible.

Janet Davidson and Foss Leach's paper on settlement around the Cook Strait concludes the volume. It is a study of the prehistory and early history of the region, focused on subsistence and settlement tied to the question of the nature of interaction across the strait. Among other things the unique environment and history of the region are used to argue for a "subsistence model ...for Cook Strait [that] is fundamentally different from most models of economic change in New Zealand prehistory..." (p. 269). This is a succinct case study that emphasizes the importance of considering details of regional differences in the larger picture of settlement and landscape changes.

I suspect that every archaeologist who has worked in the Pacific has at one time or another written about islands as "anthropological laboratories." However, despite the many fine overviews and comparative summaries of Pacific cultures

(prehistoric and ethnographic) that have been written, comparative research has always fallen far short of the laboratory potential because data have been highly variable in quantity and quality, critical methods poorly developed (that is, means of replicable measurement of variables), and theory often muddled. This collection of papers and many other recent publications in journals and books indicate that this is rapidly changing. This is a solid set of papers that explores the complex interplay between human action and the environment (landscape), provides good summaries of the settlement pattern and prehistory of a number of islands or island groups, and contains a number of methodological and theoretical perspectives that deserve further attention, broader application, and refinement.

This is the ninth volume that the Easter Island Foundation has published since 1997. The EIF is to be congratulated for this continuing effort and for the fact that all of their publications are of substance. It is hoped that this will become one of the reliable series of Pacific publishing for decades to come.

Meanwhile, a bleary day has turned to sunshine, and I'm going outside to do some landscaping.

### REFERENCES

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### *Circle of the Sea. Creations from Oceania*

Museum of Natural History, Providence, R. I. 2002.

Text by Norman Hurst.

96 pages. Full color, 9.5 x 11". ISBN 0-9646544-1-5. Available from Hurst Gallery, 54 Mount Auburn St., Cambridge MA 02138. Price \$20

Review by Deborah Waite, University of Hawai'i

The catalog *Circle of the Sea. Creations from Oceania* accompanied the similarly-named exhibition of artifacts from the Pacific in the collection of the Museum of Natural History, Roger Williams Park, Providence, Rhode Island. According to the Introduction written by Tracy Keogh, Museum Director and Marilyn Massaro, Curator of Collections, the exhibition opened a newly-restored Pacific Hall in June 2000. The opening followed a two-year period of renovation during which the artifacts had been restored, cleaned and appraised.

The Introduction to the catalog provides a history of the museum which first opened in 1896, and of the Pacific Hall which opened on May 11, 1954. The Pacific Hall was "de-installed" in the late 1970s, and by the mid-1980s the Pacific collection was closed to the public. A variety of factors had taken serious toll on the museum. Major renovations began to take place in the 1990s. Full details of the rise, fall, and re-awakening of this museum collection are contained in the Intro-

duction which is accompanied by small archival photographs of installations/displays before and after renovation.

The bulk of the catalog text was written by Norman Hurst of the Hurst Gallery, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Hurst divides his text into six sections: Sculpture and Image, Weapons and Warfare, Tattoo and Ornament, Trade and Exchange, Barkcloth, and Technology. Each section is illustrated by full or half-page color plates. A catalog of sixty-five artifacts follows the text; in the catalog, each artifact is illustrated by a postage-stamp-sized colored photograph. Polynesian and Fijian artifacts predominate in this collection. Also included, however, are bowls and weapons from Belau and Kiribati in Micronesia, two lime spatulas from the Massim region of New Guinea, and a single canoe prow figurehead from the Solomon Islands.

According to the Introduction, the artifacts came to the museum from two principal sources: the Providence Franklin Society and the Jenks Museum of Brown University. Pertinent and detailed information regarding their intended functions appears in the catalog. Many, if not most of the artifacts would appear to have considerable age and are excellent examples of their type. It is definitely a collection worth seeing. Barring a trip to Rhode Island, this catalog makes acquaintance with the collection possible. Among the artifacts in the collection, certain ones perhaps deserve particular notice. Readers of *Rapa Nui Journal* should note that three images from Rapanui, a crouching figure (E3198), a very fine *moai kavakava* (E3098) and a *moko* (E1910) are featured on the front and back covers of the catalog. The crouching figure and *moko* have been estimated to be of late eighteenth or early nineteenth century date, and the *moai kavakava* to be of early nineteenth century derivation. Its donor, a Captain W. P. Salisbury, was "master of the China trade vessel *Hanover* from 1833 to 1838". He apparently never actually went to Rapa Nui so must have obtained the figure somewhere else on his voyages.

The collection contains several pieces of barkcloth. Particularly noteworthy, to this writer, are two barkcloth shawls or cloaks (*ahu fara*) from Tahiti. One (E3517) is dated "circa 1790s" and the other (E3282) "circa 1800-1910". A very fine Hawaiian *lei niho palaoa* (E2278), a necklace comprised of a sperm whale tooth suspended from coils of braided human hair (*lauhoho*) which contained the genealogical mana and presence of an ancestor represents one of the more significant artifacts in the collection.

Without doubt, the most distinctive artifact from this collection (and I use the word "from" deliberately) is a Hawaiian image (*ki'i lka'au*) which formerly supported weapons. The image (E2733) had been donated to the museum by Daniel Tillinghast Aborn, born to New England parents in Hawai'i in 1790. He apparently visited New England several times and donated several artifacts to the Providence Franklin Society, one of the two sources of artifacts in the Pacific collection of the Museum of Natural History.

This rare Hawaiian image played an important and controversial role during its tenure at the museum. Attempts to sell it in order to finance restoration of the Pacific Hall were aborted by Hawaiian organizations, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Hui Malama I Na Kupuna 'O Hawaii who, with the aid of officials representing NAGPRA (The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act), were able to secure the return of

this image to Hawai'i. A generous financial gift from the Hawaiian societies to the museum made possible the restoration and exhibition of other artifacts in the Pacific Collection. The catalog (pp. 12-13) gives a succinct account of two years of negotiations, debates, and litigation regarding this image, but an even fuller report is contained in a recently-published article by Angela J. Neller, "From Utilitarian to Sacred: The Transformation of a Traditional Hawaiian Object", in *Pacific Art: Persistence, Change, and Meaning*, University of Hawaii Press, 2002: pp. 126-138.

Probably because of its role, large color photographs of front and reverse views of this Hawaiian image frame the text of this museum catalog. One wonders why the image retains its museum number in this catalog, published in 2002 after the return of the image to Hawai'i in 1998. Partly because of the manner in which this catalog features the Hawaiian image, the image and its role at the museum, but also because of the superb Pacific collection, the catalog *Circle of the Sea, Creations from Oceania* will remain as one of significance among catalogs of Pacific collections.



### *A History of the Pacific Islands*

Steven Roger Fischer, 2002

ISBN 0-333-94976-7 paperback

Palgrave<sup>1</sup>, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire G21 6XS  
and 175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010

*Review by Joan Seaver Kurze*

The 20,000 Pacific Islands have already been well recorded by the likes of Thor Heyerdahl, Douglas Oliver, Peter Bellwood, Roger Greene, Patrick Kirch and others. Why another book on the subject now? Steven Fischer answers this question in the Preface and Introduction to his *History of the Pacific Islands*.

The University of Exeter asked Fischer to write this book as an addition to their Palgrave Essential Histories. It will be, "very useful in a range of undergraduate courses", states the University of Auckland's Hugh Laracy. So, to fulfill a mission thought by some scholars to be overly vast and complex a subject for one volume, Fischer produced 304 pages of text, seven maps, and a strong "Selected Further Reading" section of standard Pacific sources that includes the most recent available literature.

To Fischer, Pacific Islanders are not the "eternally passive victims" described by Oliver nor are they "eternally active agents". Instead he prefers a more recent analysis -- one that speaks of 'Islander Agency' and how Islanders responded to the invaders as "doers and receivers". Fischer sets out to analyze, in a chronological fashion, how new environments affected "sociocultural systems" that Pacific Islanders had constructed for themselves way before the "western invasion". In other words, he wants to explore, the "interplay between event (history) and structure (culture)."

Fischer's focus on the post-colonial positions of Pacific Islanders in his *History* differs from that of most other studies with their emphasis on prehistory and colonialism. In Fischer's closing chapter, *The 'New Pacific'*, he examines changes in Islanders' ethnicity as well as alterations in their economies. The effect colonialism had on the role of women also is discussed,